

# GRAMMATICAL THEORY IN WESTERN EUROPE

1500–1700

---

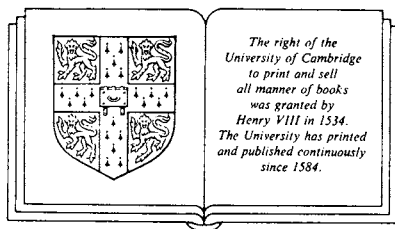
---

## *Trends in Vernacular Grammar II*

---

---

G. A. PADLEY



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE

NEW YORK NEW ROCHELLE

MELBOURNE SYDNEY

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge  
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP  
32 East 57th Street, New York, NY 10022, USA  
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1988

First published 1988

Printed in Great Britain by Redwood Burn Ltd.,  
Trowbridge

*British Library cataloguing in publication data*

Padley, G. A.

Grammatical theory in Western Europe,  
1500–1700: trends in vernacular grammar II

1. linguistics – Europe – History
2. Grammar, Comparative and general –  
History

I. Title

415'.094 P81.E9

*Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data*

Padley, G. A., 1924–86

Grammatical theory in Western Europe, 1500–1700.

Bibliography.

Includes index.

1. Grammar, Comparative and general – History.
2. Linguistics – Europe – History – 16th century.
3. Linguistics – Europe – History – 17th century.

P71.P3 1988 415 84–12104

ISBN 0 521 33514 0

# CONTENTS

---

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| <i>Foreword</i>                                     | <i>page</i> vii |
| Introduction  | i               |
| 1 Italy: the rhetorical impetus                     | 5               |
| 2 Spain: a Spanish Renaissance?                     | 154             |
| 3 England: an English interlude                     | 230             |
| 4 Germany: Luther and the dialects                  | 244             |
| 5 France: Latin norms and vernacular<br>inventories | 319             |
| <i>Bibliography</i>                                 | 488             |
| <i>Index</i>  | 527             |

# INTRODUCTION

---

Writing in 1683, the Newark schoolmaster John Twells makes a distinction between ‘methodical’ grammarians in the tradition of Scaliger and Sanctius,<sup>1</sup> who base their analyses on an underlying philosophical theory, and ‘technological’ ones representing the centuries-old persistence of observational grammar – of what (following Scioppius)<sup>2</sup> Twells calls ‘grammatica cloacina’, after the grammarian Crates of Mallus, who while on a visit to Rome fell into a privy. Having in my 1985 volume dealt with those authors who apply to grammatical description some kind of theory, whether linguistic or pedagogical, I now turn to those works of the period 1500–1700 that are based on the description of usage, or on the dictates of a particular norm. It is indeed what has been widely seen as its slavish imitation of inherited norms that lies behind the general neglect of the Renaissance in the history of linguistics, particularly in the United States, where the first chapter of Bloomfield’s *Language* set the tone for a generally accepted and distorted view.<sup>3</sup> It cannot of course be denied that the fact that the roots of Renaissance humanist culture are in the civilization of Greece and Rome has a profound effect on the development of grammatical theory. Humanist culture is very much based on the imitation of its classical predecessors. Given the prestige of Latin, and the humanist drive to imitate the best authorities, it is inevitable that at first vernacular grammars are conceived in a Latin mould. It follows that these earliest tentative descriptions can only be fully understood in the light of the vast humanist effort to codify the Latin language

<sup>1</sup> J. C. Scaliger, *De causis linguae Latinae*, Lyons, 1540; F. Sanctius, *Minerva: seu de causis linguae Latinae*, Salamanca, 1587. The text of Twells’ *Grammatica Reformata, or A General Examination of the Art of Grammar* (published in London) is also given in C. Lecointre, ‘Twells upon Lily’, *Rekonstruktion und Interpretation*, ed. K. D. Dutz and L. Kaczmarek, Tübingen, 1985, pp. 143–87.

<sup>2</sup> *Grammatica philosophica*, Amsterdam, 1664 (first edition 1628).

<sup>3</sup> New York, 1933. H. J. Izzo, ‘Transformational History of Linguistics and the Renaissance’, *Forum Linguisticum* 1 (1976), p. 51, sees more recent interpretations of linguistic history of the Transformational–Generative school, ‘making the empirical orientation of so-called “structuralism” look like a brief aberration’, as providing an added distortion.

## Introduction

that preceded them. Even when grammarians of the vernacular finally feel sufficiently confident to launch out on their own and throw off the Latin yoke, they still have to justify themselves within the terms of a Latinizing culture. The western grammatical tradition is an indivisible whole in which both the vernacular and the Latin contributions must be studied if we are to have more than a partial, lopsided view. There has however recently been some attempt to present another side of Renaissance endeavours, bringing into relief its pioneering work in phonetics and orthography.<sup>4</sup> H. J. Izzo, among others, has underlined the importance of a revolution in outlook in which Renaissance linguists turn their attention to *living* languages and to actual spoken usage. It is perhaps this pre-occupation with usage and with the practical details of phonetics and spelling that in the final analysis represents their distinctive contribution to the study of language, and their chief orientation. There is no denying the importance and value of many an empirical analysis based on actual vernacular structure. In phonetics, the Renaissance theorists made greater strides than they have been credited with. On the strictly grammatical level, however, these analyses take place in the sixteenth century within a framework of inherited Latin *theory*. In this respect, there is a sharp contrast between for instance the keen observation of actual vernacular usage by Louis Meigret (1550), and the same author's entirely derivative theoretical stance. One can indeed agree with Izzo's claim that 'much of the best Renaissance linguistic scholarship is descriptivist and empiricist, even antiprescriptivist and antirationalist'.<sup>5</sup> But such advances by their very nature are made precisely in those areas that are the domain of historians of the individual west European vernaculars: Trabalza, *Storia della grammatica italiana*;<sup>6</sup> Jellinek, *Geschichte der neuhochdeutschen Grammatik*.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Izzo's 'Phonetics in Sixteenth-Century Italy: Giorgio Bartoli and John David Rhys', *Historiographia Linguistica* ix:3 (1982), pp. 335-59 and, for orthography, F. J. Hausmann's *Louis Meigret, humaniste et linguiste*, Tübingen, 1980.

<sup>5</sup> 'Phonetics in Sixteenth-Century Italy', p. 335.

<sup>6</sup> First ed. Milan, 1908. Attention may be drawn here to the strictures expressed on this work by A. Scaglione, *Ars grammatica*, The Hague and Paris, 1970, pp. 38-9. Calling Trabalza's *Storia* 'a shining example of the way in which one should not deal with such a subject', Scaglione criticizes him for treating grammar as 'a pseudo-concept invented for didactic purposes of a normative character but directly in conflict with the true nature of language - the free expression of individual intuition'. His Crocean antecedents lead him, according to Scaglione, to see in the history of grammar 'a gradual realization of grammar's own futility'.

<sup>7</sup> Heidelberg, 1913-14. Kukenheim's *Contributions à l'histoire de la grammaire italienne, espagnole et*

## Introduction

Though the treatment in the present volume, which is also to some extent determined by developments in each separate major west European language, must of necessity be arranged by countries, it takes as its premise the fact that no single vernacular tradition can be studied in isolation, either from work on Latin or from analysis of the vulgar tongues elsewhere in Europe. Throughout the whole territory, as M. Fumaroli has emphasized,<sup>8</sup> all disciplines at this period – including grammar – obtain their *raison d'être* from their common unity in rhetoric, in the art of speech. 'How can we begin', asks J. J. Murphy, 'to understand the importance of relations between rhetoric and grammar in the Renaissance if we do not first grasp the scope of rhetoric itself?'<sup>9</sup> The period 1400–1600 is one in which profound changes take place in the relationship between rhetoric, logic and grammar, changes about which, according to L. Giard, *on a European scale* we still know comparatively little.<sup>10</sup> As attention is increasingly focused on the vernaculars, logic (more particularly of importance for the authors treated in my 1985 work) retreats into the background. Perhaps, as Giard suggests, it owed its earlier primacy to the very fact of its privileged role in the elaboration of linguistic theory.<sup>11</sup> As for the changes in the balance of forces between rhetoric and grammar, they take place against a background of political and social evolution which includes the effects of the spread of printing, and against changes in pedagogy made in the teeth of the immobility of the universities. The first great consequence of the revolution brought about by printing was, as E. L. Eisenstein has shown,<sup>12</sup> the detachment of the New Learning from its original Mediterranean setting. A further consequence is that though Renaissance culture at first continues to be largely a scribal one, with 'a heavy reliance on oral transmission, the cultivation of speech arts and memory arts, and on the use of mnemonic aids',<sup>13</sup> there is a basic shift in the link between oral and written

*française à l'époque de la Renaissance*, Amsterdam, 1932, which includes a treatment of orthography, is in a similar category.

<sup>8</sup> *L'Age de l'éloquence*, Geneva, 1980, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> 'One Thousand Neglected Authors: The Scope and Importance of Renaissance Rhetoric', *Renaissance Eloquence*, ed. J. J. Murphy, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1983, p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> 'Du Latin médiéval au pluriel des langues, le tournant de la Renaissance', *Histoire, Epistémologie, Langage* VI:1 (1984), p. 36.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>12</sup> *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, Cambridge, 1979, p. 174.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

## *Introduction*

language. For the first time, the opportunity arises of fixing a particular written usage over wide areas. It follows that the present study is concerned above all with *norms*, with the models society adopts for its spoken and written communication. The field is vast, and there can be no question of giving here more than a selective overview. In my 1985 volume, some account was given of the intellectual assumptions underpinning certain products of Renaissance linguistic endeavour. Here the aim is to present something of the other side of Renaissance attitudes to language, treating the problems that arise from the quest for acceptable vernacular norms. The two volumes should ideally be read in conjunction.